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the librarian of Congress, the vice-president, Mr. Wellman, Mr. Bowker, and myself had a very satisfactory interview with the Postmaster-General on the subject of books and the parcel post, and future prospects with reference to cheaper rates on books; and I am sure we may say to you that the post-office department is in sympathy with our aspirations in that regard, and will coöperate with us as far as possible.

When the first speaker of the afternoon sent me the title of his paper, he had an alternative title in Latin. I was so surprised and overjoyed that I could read his Latin without a lexicon, that I wrote to him and expressed my gratification that he had used Latin which one of even my rusty Latinity could read. Since I could read it so easily he evidently concluded there was something the matter with it, so he eliminated the Latin and gave the title of his paper as simply "Prestige," practically defying me to utter any platitudes on the subject. Since he has not divulged what he is to talk about, I shall have to leave it to him to explain it to you. The librarian of the Newberry library in Chicago needs no introduction to this audience. I am pleased, however, to have the opportunity to present to the Association, Mr. W. N. C. CARLTON.

### PRESTIGE

Although not easily lending itself to precise definition, prestige is a social fact of universal importance. One of its dictionary definitions is "ascendancy based on recognition of power," but this is incomplete and unsatisfactory. As Dr. Johnson said of the camel, "It is difficult to define, but we know it when we see it." It is an intangible quality the possession of which brings recognition and power. It connotes success, distinction, and high consideration. The popular mind is quick to recognize its presence and to accord it deference and respect. Rightly understood, it is an invaluable means of maintaining and

spreading true values. It is a potency without which, "neither truth nor untruth, neither the good nor the bad, neither the beautiful nor the ugly, can succeed permanently and in the face of large numbers." My concern with it here is as an invaluable aid to power and effectiveness in accomplishing our educational and cultural aims.

We are familiar with the prestige that everywhere surrounds inherited wealth, high rank, and illustrious ancestry. It also attaches itself to ideas, to institutions, and to causes which have furthered man's upward progress. It is certain to be won through conspicuous success in statesmanship, in the arts of war, in commerce, in science, and in the fine arts. Institutions gain prestige through the character or genius of certain men associated with them. Great as is the prestige which surrounds the chief magistracy of this nation, I cannot but feel that something additional has been added to it by reason of the fact that he who now holds the presidential office represents scholarship and learning as well as statecraft. And in this place, before this audience, it may not be unfitting for me to express the conviction that America today possesses one national institution whose prestige as a seat of learning has been created and made international by the vision and genius of one man—Herbert Putnam.

Another illustration of prestige comes inevitably to mind: Our fathers and grandfathers knew it at first hand, felt it and lived in its atmosphere, but this generation knows of it chiefly through the pages of literature. It is that prestige which, in the smaller and simpler communities of a few generations ago, surrounded the clergyman, the physician, the lawyer, and the teacher. These men, in their several communities, represented tradition, science and the Humanities. They were the repositories and representatives of the best that the past had handed down to their present; they kept its great ideals of thought and conduct alive in the imagina-

tions of their contemporaries. They were seats of authority and molders of opinion. They were leaders in the civic thought and action of their day. The elders sought their counsel, and the young men were led and inspired by their lives and example. It is no exaggeration to say that, collectively, they were perhaps the most potent influence, prior to the Civil War, in forming the moral, political, and intellectual ideals of the American people. After the Civil War this prestige was largely lost. We have as yet created nothing to take its place; we have developed no social classes or groups whose members serve and lead us as did those men of aforetime. And our country, our age, and we are infinitely the poorer for it.

When once attained, prestige persists, both in the case of ideas and of men, even unto the third and fourth generations of those who originally won it. Always and everywhere those who possess it have a marked ascendancy over their fellows, an ascendancy which enables them to wield vast powers, exert wide influence, secure a respectful hearing, attain high positions, and achieve the most positive results. History proves it a magic quality greatly to be desired.

You are, I imagine, wondering what all this chatter about prestige has to do with libraries, or with librarians. Well, for the purposes of this paper, it has everything to do with them. During the past few years I have found myself asking, Do librarians possess prestige? For what kind of "ascendancy based on power" are they notable? With what traditions and ideals are they associated in the public mind of our time? To what extent are they influencing men and opinions of the day? Is their prestige, if they have one, generally recognized and respected? To these questions I have not been able to return entirely satisfactory answers. I do not feel certain that we possess an "ascendancy based on power" of any sort, or that we exert a large influence on contemporary thought. It is not apparent to me that the

social mind of our day, either in this country or in Great Britain, associates us with any outstanding ideal or activity possessing recognized prestige. We do not yet seem to have won from it an acceptance of us as authoritative leaders in the intellectual life of the nation. It may be that we are too young a class to have had time to acquire ascendancy and power over the public mind. It may be that the conditions and temper of our time are unfavorable to our attaining social power and intellectual leadership. We have a natural relationship with the historic professions of law, theology, and teaching. But, as I have said, much of their once great moral and intellectual prestige has been lost. It may not be surprising, therefore, if we have failed to achieve prestige in a time when these more ancient but allied professions have been desperately struggling to save a remnant of theirs. The truth is that the Time-Spirit, in a mood of cruel irony, has let loose on our age, to a degree and extent hitherto unknown in modern history, a succession of extremely destructive tendencies. These are: a general flouting of authority in matters political, intellectual, spiritual, and social; the rejection of discipline, mental or moral; an inordinate passion for the physical enjoyment of the present moment; and a stubborn belief in the utilitarian or materialistic test for all things. Every one of these tendencies is hostile to what the learned professions represent; every one of them is inimical to genuine progress in civilization, culture, and refinement. The immediate duty confronting all who are identified with religion, law, and education is to seek to recover the ascendancy lost during the last fifty years and to regain their former influential prestige. We are fond of saying that libraries and library work are an important part of the educational machinery of society and that their aims and purposes are complementary to those of the teaching profession. If we believe this, we, together with the other professions which represent authority, spirituality and learning, must

labor for the complete reestablishment of the power and prestige of religion, law and the Humanities. And, to be effective aids, librarians should have a prestige of their own which the social mind shall instinctively recognize and respect.

I believe that the best and most enduring prestige requires a relationship with the past, an indelible association with something ancient and historic, something which has proved its lasting worth to mankind. I should like to insist a little on the fundamental importance of rooting our mental life deeply in the best that the past has to give us, and of retaining "the flavor of what was admirably done in past generations." The past is as needful to a wholesome, sane, intellectual life as rich soil is to growing trees and ripening grain. Although, as Shelley said a hundred years ago, the world may be weary of the past, it cannot shake itself clear of it.

Many of you will recall that passage in one of Sir Walter Besant's books on London, in which he compares ancient Westminster with modern East London. It admirably illustrates the thought which is in my mind at this moment. "Westminster," he writes, "is essentially an old historic city with its roots far down in the centuries of the past: once a Roman station; once the market place of the island; once a port; always a place of religion and unction; for six hundred years the site of the King's House; for five hundred years the seat of Parliament; for as many the home of our illustrious dead. But with East London there is no necessity to speak of history. This modern city, the growth of a single century—nay, of half a century—has no concern and no interest in the past; its present is not affected by its past; there are no monuments to recall the past; its history is mostly a blank—that blank which is the history of woods and meadows, arable and pasture land, over which the centuries pass, making no more mark than the breezes of yesterday have made on the waves and waters of the ocean."<sup>1</sup> The man or the mind without

deep, strength-giving roots in the past is an East London type, not a Westminster type. Of all contemporary professions none has such opportunity as our own to make Westminster its ideal rather than East London. Into our hands has been committed the care, preservation, and dissemination of the means whereby a knowledge of the past has been preserved, and we cannot divest ourselves of the responsibility for knowing its meaning and realizing its value as an aid to rational progress. The memorable ages of former times have been conspicuous debtors to the ages that preceded them and they have acknowledged the debt. They have not been generations which felt, as Robert Herrick says this generation feels, that they could "go it alone," without reference to the past. "The Romano-Hellenic world lived upon the Greek literature of the times from Homer downwards and based education upon it. In the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages men were constantly looking back to the ancient world as a sort of golden age and were cherishing every fragment that had come down to them therefrom. The scholars and thinkers of the Renaissance who obtained those Greek books for which their predecessors had vainly sighed, drew from those books their inspiration. It was they that lit up the fires of new literary effort in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and Britain."<sup>2</sup> And in their turn the great spirits of our Elizabethan age, Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, etc., lighted their torches from those held out by the men of the Continental Renaissance, and passed on to us the unquenchable fires originally lighted in that marvelous Greece of the years between 600 and 400 B. C. As Bacon so wisely says in his *Advancement of Learning* (Book I, c.5): "Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should take a stand thereupon and discover what is the best way; but when the discovery is well taken, then to make progression."

We cannot, then, live or think or work

<sup>1</sup> East London, c. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Bryce: *University and Historical Addresses*, p. 325.

intelligently in the present unless we understand and know what has been done in the past, and which of its ideas, ideals, truths and examples are still valid and applicable to our age and conditions. And I venture to submit that the ancient heritage with which the library profession should unmistakably connect itself, and association with which would give it a lasting prestige, is no other than Humanism and the Humanities: those precious depositories of what is best in man's past, and matchless instruments for uplifting him in the present. Ideals derived from the Humanities should inspire our daily work; our object should be to inculcate a desire for them in the minds of the people. They should color every activity with which we are concerned. Unless we make this the very heart and center of our striving, we shall never be other than a petty, office-holding class, a bureaucracy embalmed in a dull, uninspiring routine. Without Humanistic ideals and learning we cannot have a prestige truly worthy of our work.

Our association with the Humanities should begin with our earliest courses of study. The nature and kind of education required for entrance upon a profession have a fundamental bearing upon the quality of that profession's prestige. The experience of a quarter century has convinced me that the education of the librarian must be based on the most solid and comprehensive foundations and that it must not be inferior in quality or discipline or duration to that required of students in the best law, medical, and theological schools. In the high school and in the university, the course of study pursued by us should be largely a revived form of the so-called "classical course" of a generation or two ago. Our school years from at least the age of fourteen to twenty-one should be almost entirely devoted to the study of Greek, Latin, mathematics, modern languages, philosophy, history, and literature. These are not only the seven keys to Humane Learning; they are prime es-

entials to the highest order of professional work. They are things, as Plato says, "without some use or knowledge of which a man cannot become a god to the world, nor a spirit, nor yet a hero, nor able earnestly to think and care for man."<sup>3</sup>

We must learn Greek because it is the key to our most precious intellectual heritage; because, in the words of Sir Frederick Kenyon, "it makes for freedom from convention, bold experiments, and the discipline of sanity and good taste." Greece won for our world freedom in all its branches—freedom for society, freedom for the individual, freedom for thought. Out of the world of classic antiquity springs the intellectual inheritance of the western world. "The belief that Hellenism is in some sense a permanent need of the human spirit has proved a perpetually recurring theme in western literature."

"To be entirely ignorant of the Latin language," wrote Schopenhauer, "is like being in a fine country on a misty day. The horizon is extremely limited. Nothing can be seen clearly except that which is quite close; a few steps beyond, everything is buried in obscurity. But the Latinist has a wide view." . . .

Philosophy, "the study of how men think and reason, ought to be the crowning study, the last word in any education worth the name."<sup>4</sup> In philosophy, man's reason reaches its supreme expression of the human striving for what is ideally best. This is to know oneself and one's fellows, the world and God, in a more profound manner, and so as to satisfy the entire intellectual, ethical, æsthetical, and religious needs of the soul.<sup>5</sup>

An intimate knowledge of those modern European languages which have a classic literature is necessary for us all. French, German, Italian, and Spanish are of primary importance both as sources of enlightenment and as working tools. "Half the good things of the human mind are

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Bertrand Russell, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Allen Upward: *The New Word*, p. 80.

<sup>5</sup>Adapted from G. T. Ladd.

outside English altogether," says H. G. Wells. Another half-century may see the literary languages of Russia and the Scandinavian countries taking their places as parts of the necessary equipment in general culture.

While mathematics may and does serve many purposes of utility, Humanism views it as a key to the temple of the higher intellectual life. "The true spirit of delight," says Bertrand Russell, "the exaltation, the sense of being more than man, which is the touchstone of the highest excellence, is to be found in mathematics as surely as in poetry. What is best in mathematics deserves not merely to be learnt as a task, but to be assimilated as a part of daily thought, and brought again and again before the mind with ever-renewed encouragement."<sup>6</sup>

"History is for time what geography is for space."<sup>7</sup> It is the map on which mankind's struggles and triumphs are drawn. One of the most delightful of recent essays on history is that which gives the title to Mr. George Macaulay Trevelyan's *Clio*, a *Muse*; and *Other Essays*. He points out that to many persons history is the principal source of the ideas that inspire their lives; that the presentation of ideals and heroes from other ages is perhaps the most important educative function of history; and that a valuable effect of its study is to train the mind to take a just view of political problems. History educates the minds of men by causing them to reflect upon the past.

Literature, it has been said, is the chief ornament of humanity. The omission of the great literatures from any rational course of study is unthinkable. An eminent German is authority for the statement that of the number of books written in any language, only about one in one hundred thousand forms a part of its real and permanent literature. Other eminent Germans have laboriously calculated that the number of separate works issued from the

press since the invention of printing, reaches a grand total of from ten to fifteen million titles. The division of ten million by one hundred thousand results in the gratifying discovery that the quotient is none other than our old friend the "hundred best books." Here we have mathematical proof that it is possible for any intelligent person to acquaint himself with the entire canon of what is best and permanent in the world's literature. This best includes only those supreme things which are independent of time or country, those transcendent creations of human genius the understanding of which uplifts the mind and expands the soul. "Since Virgil," said James Russell Lowell, "there have been at most but four cosmopolitan authors—Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Goethe." Starting with these and their two predecessors, the Bible and Homer, you may make up your hundred as you like. My point is that the librarian above all others should have first-hand acquaintance with the serene summits of human expression.

It is my belief that with an education covering the ground and including the discipline which the foregoing implies, and with the technical training of the library school superimposed upon it, one would begin library work with a prestige fully equal to that with which the graduates of the Harvard Law School, the Johns Hopkins Medical School, the Union Theological Seminary, or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology enter upon their several professions. Add gifts of personality to this mental equipment, and the individual would inevitably be a dynamic influence in the institution or community whose service he enters. With a generation or two of librarians thus trained in the Humanities, the solid foundation of intellectual prestige would be laid. I would therefore seriously propose the Humanities as vocational training for librarians.

It is a wise saying that "definitions are dangerous," and I hesitate to embark upon the hazardous adventure of defining so

<sup>6</sup>Bertrand Russell: *Philosophical Essays*, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup>Schopenhauer.

elusive a word as Humanism. Perhaps, instead of tempting Fate with a definition, I may be permitted to describe what I mean by Humanism. To me it means a particular attitude of mind which is the result of a broad and thorough training in the liberal studies usually denominated the Humanities. It is an attitude of mind which primarily views the world and men and things in the light of pure reason and past experience. It considers reason rather than emotion to be man's most efficient guide to progress. From the "cool and quiet" of the past, the Humanist acquires standards and authorities by which to judge the value, permanence, or utility of the things which the tumultuous present unrolls before him. His training has also taught him something of human limitations, and he wastes neither time nor energy in attempting to explore regions which the past has shown to be closed to man's restless intelligence. But in other directions he is ever eager to push forward the existing boundaries of thought and knowledge. Intense intellectual curiosity and an unwearied pursuit of new knowledge are marked characteristics of the Humanist. Finally, the true Humanist does not live in and for books alone; he is keenly interested in humanity and in full sympathy with its struggle for betterment. He touches life at many points, takes active part in public affairs, always bringing his reason rather than his emotions to bear upon them. He mingles freely with his fellow-men, and, if they wish it, he is ever ready to place his knowledge or judgment at their service. But he will not force it upon them unasked, or in the spirit of a missionary determined to proselyte. The general attitude of the Humanist toward his fellows is best expressed in the famous and noble line of Terence: "*Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto*"—I am a man; therefore nothing that relates to man is without interest to me.

And now, what of the relevance of training in the Humanities to the practical

work of the librarian? How may Humanism and Humanistic Learning come more into play in the daily tasks of administration, cataloging, contact with the public, and so on? How may the prestige of our Humanistic education be continued and increased and fixed in the social mind? I can but indicate what seem to me possibilities in the way of answers to these questions. And yet, I believe these possibilities might be made actualities.

The general intellectual cultivation resulting from such training would give us a well-coördinated view of the whole world of learning. The intellectual interests naturally arising from the cultivation of liberal studies would prevent our becoming too greatly absorbed in the special library or special kind of library work with which we are connected. Intense absorption in a specialty carries with it the danger of our becoming intellectually and even professionally separated from each other. The world today shows ample evidence of the truth of Schopenhauer's prophecy that excessive specialism would produce men of learning who, outside their own subject of study, would be ignoramuses. The Humanities would develop many-sidedness and broad, tolerant views of men and things. In the language of political platforms, I "view with alarm" the increasing number of sections and special subject groups at these conferences. There appears to be going on among us the reproductive process known in botany as "vegetative multiplication." Fortunately it is not proceeding at quite so rapid a rate as in the botanical world; where in twenty-four hours a parent cell may produce millions of progeny. Nevertheless, it is going on, and the American Library Association may find itself in the position of the "old woman who lived in a shoe," with respect to its numerous children. It is the interests, ideas, and ideals which we all possess in common that make for real solidarity and cohesiveness.

The influence of Humanistic ideals would, I anticipate, give us a better defi-

niton and a stricter delimitation of the scope of our activities than now appears to exist. We spread our labor and energy over an enormous area, but the extent and depth of soil really enriched by our efforts seem pitifully small. The manifestations under which we present ourselves to the public are appalling in their number and variety. In addition to the great diversity of work more or less proper to library activity, we are blithely assuming many duties and responsibilities which rightly belong to the family, the home, the school, and the individual. Verily, that way madness lies. The most acceptable type of librarian at this moment would seem to be some such person as the one who recently inserted the following advertisement in the "Personal" column of the London Times: "A gentleman, age 33, with experience in thirty occupations in twelve countries, always employed, wishes to interview those who may require his services."<sup>8</sup>

According to Thucydides, Pericles once remarked that "the mischief is in setting to work without being first enlightened." Are we fully enlightened with respect to the reasons for our multifarious efforts and fields of labor? The first chapter of an admirable volume entitled, *The American Public Library*, asserts that the "American library idea is simply tantamount to a confession that the library, as a distributor, must obey the laws that all distributors must obey, if they are to succeed in the largest sense. . . . The successful distributor through trade is precisely he who does not sit down and wait for customers. He takes the whole community as a group of possible clients; he tries to suit the tastes of each and to create a demand for his goods where it does not exist. The librarian must do likewise if he desires to distribute his goods as widely and effectively as possible, and if he believes in the modern idea he does so desire." This is, I think, a fair and just description of the "commercial traveler"

theory of librarianship. But to me the conception of the librarian as a "drummer" and of books as a "line of goods" is absolutely repulsive. With that ideal possessing our minds, and the "goods" idea as an objective, we should need no higher grade of intellectual equipment than that required of "drummers." The prestige of a learned profession can never come from following commercial ideals.

. . . "Look round, look up, and feel,  
a moment's space,  
That carpet-dusting, though a pretty  
trade,  
Is not the imperative labour after all."<sup>9</sup>

Humanism would make us realize that too great a sacrifice of self often results in the destruction and waste of finer and more valuable human beings than those for whom the self-sacrifice is made. Frankly, I am not a willing subject of King Demos; he is a sordid sovereign whose unenlightened and tyrannical demands constantly provoke me to revolt. I am by no means certain that a successful branch library in a crowded section of one of our great cities is worth the sacrifice of a woman's health or life, even though she be willing to make it. The pathway of library progress during the last thirty years is strewn with wrecked bodies and tired minds, the pathetic results of a too great sacrifice for an imagined public good. The public accepts our utilitarian and humanitarian services with smug complacency and, like *Oliver Twist*, asks for more. We serve a day laborer's hours often for less than a day laborer's wage. Self-assertion supported by ability, rather than self-sacrifice uselessly given, is the way to prestige and power.

The Humanistic attitude of mind should attract more young men to those sides of library work not chiefly or purely administrative. We must have independent knowledge and authority in all our libraries. In the realm of the mind, standardization means stagnation. As Dr. R. C. Cabot so well says: "Work falls flat, play

<sup>8</sup>Times, 19 March, 1914.

<sup>9</sup>Elizabeth B. Browning: *Aurora Leigh*, Book I, Lines 878-880.



and art become sterile, love and worship become conventional, unless there is originality, personal creation in each."<sup>10</sup> Our catalog, classification, general and special reference divisions, all need men of learning, men whose disciplined training in scholarship and whose creative powers are unquestioned. I want to see everywhere in these divisions men possessing the same attitude toward their work and taking the same high intellectual pleasure in it that we see, for example, in the best type of curator in museums of science and the fine arts.

The Humanistic attitude would relegate utilitarianism to its proper place. We should see more clearly that utility, however excellent, does not carry prestige with it in the public mind. If it did, carpenters and bricklayers would rank with peers and presidents. It is not the utility of a Greek vase which makes it an object of desire. Administration, which is a very utilitarian thing, would be subordinated to the higher things which our occupation implies. To those of you who may be filled with a consuming ambition to be executives, to be great administrators, I would repeat in all earnestness that a general victory of the tendency you admire would lower what ought to be a learned profession to a "line of business" such as that of the department stores or mail-order houses. I have great respect for commercial activity; I am even an admirer of "big business" and its masterly triumphs in the way of organization, but my ideal of the great librarian has nothing in common with my ideal of the great man of business. One must be something more than a great administrator to be a great librarian. Great librarianship implies sound scholarship, and the courage to proclaim the highest intellectual ideals. The taste and savor of administration, even at its best, are not that of the delicious fruit you imagine it, but rather that of the Apples of Sodom. We may gain the highest distinction as executives, but in so doing we may destroy all possibility

of being torch-bearers of divine fires. The librarian truly desirous of strengthening his position and elevating his occupation will seek by long and continuous study to make himself an authority and recognized expert in some special branch of learning, preferably in the field of the Humanities. This is a duty he owes to his calling, and we have the examples of men like Panizzi, Garnett, Bradshaw, Leopold Delisle, Winsor, Poole, and Trumbull to encourage us in the pursuit of special attainment in addition to our general equipment. Recognized ability as a scholar would give the librarian far more influence and prestige in his community than the greatest of his administrative triumphs. This ability, spread through an entire profession, would give real power to influence popular thought and opinion.

Never in the history of this nation have trained leadership and true enlightenment been more needed than now. Surely no man loved and believed in the people more than Walt Whitman, who once wrote: "For know you not that the people of our land may all read and write, and may all possess the right to vote—and yet the main things may be entirely lacking?" Our people are indeed gorged with reading and writing and voting, but to me it seems evident that the teeming masses lack some things fundamentally necessary to citizenship and intellectual enlightenment. And I fear that for some time past their leaders in matters political, economic, and educational, those who should have led them wisely and firmly, have too often yielded to the people's unreasoned desires and unwise demands, and compromised where compromise has been fatal. Are we entirely guiltless?

The libraries which should do much toward raising standards of literary authority and appreciation, which should lead the way in associating learning with librarianship, are especially those attached to our colleges and universities. It is time for them to be making some notable contribution to the advancement of our work and the increase of our power and prestige, for

<sup>10</sup>What Men Live By. 1914.

hitherto they have been laggards in the race we have run and the least progressive of any group represented in this Association. Nearly all the present triumphs of organization and management, of coöperative effort and the standardization of processes, have been won by the municipal and governmental libraries. To the college and university libraries much has been given in the way of rich collections of literary and scientific material, and I for one think we have the right to expect much from them in the way of leadership in fields peculiarly theirs, and particularly in the things for which, by implication, I have been pleading in this address.

I have time and space for only the briefest indication of one or two further suggestions as to how we all, guided by Humanistic ideals, might be of service to the republic and increase our prestige. History is an indispensable study for every citizen of a free state. During the past half-century, while it has been sedulously cultivated in our higher institutions of learning, its interest and attraction to the reading public of England and America have greatly declined. Speaking of the influence which contemporary historians and historical thinkers exerted in forming the ideas of the English people during the early part of the Victorian era, Mr. G. M. Trevelyan says that with the rise and dominance of the scientific school of historians and its mad worship of "documents," the former tie between history and the reading public was broken. And, says Charles Whibley: "By a stroke of the pen the lecturers at the *École des Chartes* divorced history from what they believed its immoral union with literature." The results of this divorce have been deplorable, but happily there are numerous signs of a reaction at this moment. We might aid this particular reaction. Librarians ought to assist every effort, from whatever direction it may come, to make popular the reading and study of the best-written histories. "History," says Gibbon, "is the most popular species of writing since it can adapt

itself to the highest or the lowest capacity." We should not hesitate to exalt Gibbon, Carlyle, Macaulay, Froude, Green, Prescott, Motley, Parkman, Fiske, and other "literary" historians over the later generation of honest but uninspiring, industrious but uninteresting document gatherers. The more popular history can be made the better it will be for the state. By emphasizing, in season and out of season, the necessity of a knowledge of past history as a guide to present action, we shall contribute something toward producing stable-minded citizens really fit for exercising political duties and responsibilities.

In the field of literature librarians have unexcelled opportunities for rendering high service to the state and associating themselves in the public mind with the things which make for prestige. Just as the study of history informs and clarifies the mind of the citizen with respect to his political and social conduct, so the reading and absorption of the best in literature will refine his thought and enrich his life with appreciation of the beautiful. The Humanistic equipment and attitude are necessary if we wish to aid in raising the standard of literary taste and appreciation among the people. We are in daily touch with thousands who need leadership and direction in the formation of a taste for that which is best in *belles-lettres*. It will scarcely be denied that the majority of the people in England and America today have their tastes formed and supplied by newspapers and cheap periodicals. The quality of taste so formed is of the most inferior kind, and the stuff it feeds upon contains no stimulus to seek higher. Compulsory education gives the masses the ability to read, but not always the power to think, to estimate, to discriminate and to judge aright. The irresponsible newspaper, the commercialized periodical, and the sordid followers of the trade of authorship, all batten on this condition. It should be war to the knife between the public libraries and these corrupting in-

fluences if the libraries are sincere in their desire to carry aloft the banner of the ideal. There is but one attitude that we can afford to take with respect to imaginative literature, viz., that the best alone is worthy of inclusion in our collections and only the best has power to elevate taste and refine appreciation. The inclusion of a second-best or a third-best, in the expectation that these will lead to the appreciation of the very best, is, to my mind a theory not altogether justified by its results. The world's greatest literature and art may be understood and appreciated by any moderately intelligent mind which is willing to submit itself to trained and disinterested guidance. We must set up the highest standards and then practice them. The ideal public library would be one containing only those books of the past and present whose authority or beauty is unquestioned, the timeless books "that show, contain, and nourish all the world." The prestige of a library like this would be such that any person seen with one of its volumes would instinctively be respected by his fellow-citizens.

Some of you will say: "But we have to compromise; the people will not have the best. We must compromise in order to secure any hold at all upon them." I regretfully admit that fact, but I urge all the more strongly the necessity of our securing more prestige, power, and authority in order that our compromises may be fewer. In the meantime, let us be entirely honest with ourselves and the world as to the nature and kind of compromises we are forced to make in these high matters of education, literature, and the cultivation of taste among the people. Let us tell the exact truth about them and not deceive either ourselves or the world as to the reasons why we compromise. In his classic essay on the subject, Viscount Morley has clearly shown the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate compromise. "It is legitimate compromise," he writes, "to say: 'I do not expect you to execute this improvement in my time. But at any rate

it shall not be my fault if the improvement remains unknown or rejected.' It is illegitimate compromise to say: 'I cannot persuade you to accept my truth; therefore I will pretend to accept your falsehood.'"

I would not have you think that I wish to disparage the useful educational and practical services that our libraries are now rendering to society. I am not without appreciation of the devotion and unselfishness which have gone into the humanitarian activities of the modern library. I do not wish to be thought of as one who sits idly by and praises past times. What I have said here has been said with a "forward-looking" mind eager for greater triumphs, greater power, greater prestige than we have ever yet had. Although I reverence the past, I also care greatly for the future and the kind of civilization for which America will be remembered in the time to come. I desire to see those associated with higher education and with libraries help prepare the soil wherefrom future leadership in intellectual power may spring. At present, intellect is dragged like a captive behind the chariot of utility. It is the slave of commerce and a thing held in contempt by the people unless it ministers to their physical comfort. We have in this country as yet, no such respect for higher learning as the Germans have and no such respect for literature as characterizes the French. I hope for a greatly changed condition, which we shall have helped to bring about. I hope to see learning attain a position in this land like that attained by Stoicism in Rome under Marcus Aurelius. Says Pater in the fifteenth chapter of *Marius the Epicurean*: "It was no longer a rude and unkempt thing. Received at court, it had largely decorated itself; it had become persuasive and insinuating, and sought not only to convince men's intelligences but to allure their souls." In the near future I look for one of those outbreaks of the spirit which, as Pater says, "come naturally with particular periods—times when, in men's approaches to art

and poetry, curiosity may be noticed to take the lead, when men come to art and poetry with a deep thirst for intellectual excitement, after a long *ennui*, or in reaction against the strain of outward, practical things." I want those who represent learning and librarianship to welcome such an outbreak of the spirit with sympathy and understanding. I want them to be a selected and articulate class fit for high leadership in their chosen activities and possessing an intellectual and social prestige everywhere recognized and respected. I want them to be men who, in the words of H. G. Wells, "will have the knowledge, nerve and courage to do splendid, dangerous things." I want them to be upholders of qualitative rather than quantitative standards. I want them to be brave defenders of ideas and ideals rather than dumb servants of men and forces whose god is materialism.

"Two things only," it has been said, "are assured of immortality; ideas and monuments." For which of these would we prefer to have our age and country memorable? The ideas of the Greeks are still as vital and active as the properties of radium; the monuments of Mesopotamia exist, but are buried beneath the sands of the desert. Which are we to be, Greeks or Mesopotamians?

President ANDERSON: The Program committee felt that there might be too much airy persiflage in the programs for the general sessions, and cast about for someone to sound the serious note. Of course it did not take us long to light upon the next speaker as the proper one to strike the note of seriousness and solemnity. She is a great reader of novels, and a discriminating reader. She has, I understand, gleaned some choice selections from some of her favorite authors, with which she proposes to edify us. She is so well known to all of you that I simply present Miss AGNES VAN VALKENBURGH, of New York.

Miss Van Valkenburgh then amused and edified her audience by a selection of

"Readings from recent fiction," choosing three of the recent "best sellers" as the subjects of her kindly wit and irony.

The secretary then read the report of the Committee on resolutions.

#### REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS

The Committee on resolutions beg leave to recommend the adoption of the following minute, to be spread upon the records of the Association, copies to be forwarded to the several bodies and persons therein mentioned:

RESOLVED, That the heartiest thanks of the American Library Association be, and are hereby tendered:

To the librarian of Congress, for the gracious welcome to the national capital extended by him to this Association at the first session of the present conference; for opening to inspection the beautiful structure under his control, and for numberless personal courtesies which have lent peculiar charm to an occasion which will always remain a notable one in the annals of the Association.

To the associates of the librarian on the staff of the Library of Congress, who have ably and devotedly cooperated with their chief in showing treasures, and in explaining methods of the great institution with which they are connected; and to express our deep sense of obligation and gratitude to the Library of Congress as the national library in fact and spirit, if not in name; and to testify to the immeasurable service rendered to the libraries and the library movement of this country by the labors and activities undertaken by that institution for the common good.

To the District of Columbia Library Association for most effective aid in all plans regarding the conference, and for the delightful reception on Thursday evening, which gave great pleasure to all who could attend it.

To the members of the board of trustees of the public library of the District